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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5534
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5830
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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 0659
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0998
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002797

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [11. Mideast](#)
- [12. Iran](#)
- [13. Global War on Terror](#)

Key stories in the media:

All media quoted Khaled Mashal, the head of Hamas's political

bureau, as saying that Hamas does not plan to extend its truce with Israel beyond this Friday, December 19, which is when the organization claims it is due to expire. However, Hamas PM Ismail Haniyeh in Gaza was less definite. Major media quoted FM Tzipi Livni as saying that Israel cannot leave Gaza under Hamas's control. The media reported that Amos Gilad, the head of the Defense Ministry's Diplomatic-Security Bureau, traveled to Cairo yesterday. Israel Radio quoted him as saying that there is no need to extend the truce. Many media again raised the possibility of a wide-ranging IDF operation in Gaza. All media reported that during a mass rally in Gaza City, Hamas members, including one dressed as Gilad Shalit, acted out a scene in which the Israeli prisoner begs PM Ehud Olmert to show consideration for his plight.

Leading electronic media reported that this morning the High Court of Justice acceded to the state's demand for the release of 206 Palestinian prisoners as a gesture out of the respect for the Muslim Festival of the Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha). They were released today.

Yesterday The Jerusalem Post reported that the more FM Tzipi Livni speaks publicly, the more anger is growing in Kadima.

Yesterday The Jerusalem Post reported that chief PA negotiator Ahmed Qurei told Palestinian reporters over the weekend that there is no room for Jews in the West Bank. Yesterday Mako, a Channel 2-TV-affiliated web site, quoted Qurei as saying that Israel has asked PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas to concede 7% of the West Bank in a final status arrangement. Israel has also asked as part of the terms of the final-status arrangement that the city of Ariel remain under Israeli sovereignty as well as MaQaleh Adumim, Givat Zeev, and the Etzion Bloc.

Electronic media reported that last night former Knesset member Ilan Gillon won Meretz's internal elections; MK Zahava Gal-On came in second and former MK Mossi Raz took third; MK Avshalom Vilan and ultra-Orthodox activist Zvia Greenfield got the fourth and fifth slots. The party's final Knesset list will be composed of those elected yesterday and members of the new left-wing party, possibly including journalist Nitzan Horovitz (Channel 10-TV and former HaQaretz Washington and Paris correspondent).

HaQaretz reported that representatives of the Quartet, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund are asking PM Ehud Olmert to continue sending funds to Gaza in a bid to avoid the collapse of its banking system.

HaQaretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday DM Ehud Barak accused the justice system of impeding efforts to enforce law and order in the territories by treating lawbreakers too leniently.

The Jerusalem Post reported that senior defense officials have told the daily that the Israel Air Force is hopeful that a new Pentagon plan to buy 60 F-22 stealth fighter jets will include a push to end a congressional ban on exporting the stealth aircraft.

Yesterday The Jerusalem Post reported on a UN-sponsored conference in Vienna that tries to bring Israelis and Palestinians together.

Maariv reported that IAEA investigators believe that Israel is hiding pictures of its attack on the Syrian reactor.

Senator Kit Bond, the ranking Republican on the U.S. Senate's Intelligence Committee, was quoted as saying yesterday in an interview with The Jerusalem Post that QcarrotsQ won't work in getting Iran to stop its nuclear development.

HaQaretz reported on an international conference on jihad that took place in Jerusalem yesterday, in which American scholar Daniel Pipes took a more moderate stance than rightist Dutch legislator Geert Wilders.

The media reported that yesterday the police postponed permission for a right-wing march scheduled for today in the Israeli-Arab town of Umm el-Fahm.

Over the weekend all media reported that less than three years after he took Israeli politics by storm, Minister Ami Ayalon is going to leave the cabinet and, apparently, politics altogether.

Maariv and other media reported that yesterday the cabinet approved the pension Qsafety net.

11. Mideast:

Summary:

Military correspondent Amos Harel and Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz: QThe Shalit element in [yesterdayQs] rally shows Hamas cannot offer its supporters much except a good place in the next world.

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QThe international community sometimes loses track of the fact that the suffering in Gaza, as Israel seeks to thwart the rocket attacks on its civilians, is a consequence of Hamas's disinclination to meet those minimal conditions.

The Jerusalem Post editorialized: QWe can still hope that a strong Western position vis-`-vis Syria, of the kind [Jimmy] Carter has so far proven woefully incapable of taking, might one day encourage the kind of institution-building and civil society that would transform today's Ba'athist dictatorship into a regime capable of making peace with Israel.

Block Quotes:

II. "Is Hamas Going to Change its Spots?"

Military correspondent Amos Harel and Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (12/15): QHamas marked the 21st anniversary of its establishment by [Sheikh Ahmed] Yassin and a group of students, with a 200,000-strong rally, according to Gaza reporters. The high point was particularly repulsive, even for Hamas ceremonies. Reenacting bus bombings has apparently gone out of fashion, but Hamas found a replacement: a man dressed in an IDF uniform in the role of Gilad Shalit missing his mother and father (in Hebrew). Haniyeh and his aides watched this miserable performance from the grandstand. From the television pictures they appeared undeservedly smug. After all, they have not returned even one Palestinian prisoner to his parents, two and a half years after Shalit's abduction, while the PA has received more than 900 prisoners from Israel in that time. The rally shows there is apparently nothing much to the hope of quite a few people in Israel and the West that Hamas is going to change its spots. Even now, Hamas continues promising that Palestinian refugees will return to the homes they lost in 1948, and that the war will go on until Israel is destroyed.

The Shalit element in the rally shows Hamas cannot offer its supporters much except a good place in the next world.

II. "Repugnant Hamas"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (12/15): QThe mass rally organized by Hamas in Gaza to celebrate its 21st anniversary yesterday was a spectacle repulsive to Israelis. With trademark cruelty, the gathering included a provocative Qplay featuring a character dressed as captive IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, pleading in Hebrew for his freedom: QI miss my mom and dadQ.... But the kind of Hamas callousness exemplified at yesterday's rally should not only be repulsive to Israelis. It should give pause to the whole world, and most especially to Hamas's co-religionists. Commendably, most of the international community has resisted the idea of legitimizing Hamas so long as it does not recognize Israel's right to exist, abandon terrorism and accept previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements. But the international community sometimes loses track of the fact that the suffering in Gaza, as Israel seeks to thwart the rocket attacks on its civilians, is a consequence of Hamas's disinclination to meet those minimal conditions. Even Israel's leaders have not always internalized the impossibility of dealing with the bleak, unyielding Hamas. But while Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and would-be Likud defense minister Moshe Ya'alon have drawn criticism from the Qfree Shalit at

all costsQ supporters, their latest comments unfortunately make belated good sense. Kadima leader Livni told high school students in Tel Aviv last week that Qwe all want Gilad to come home, but there is always the risk of minimum casualties and it isn't always possible to bring everyone home.

III. "Syria, As It Is"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (12/14): QWhen he met with Assad yesterday, [Jimmy] Carter should have kept in mind the regime's insecure and vulnerable position. Some of that insecurity is economic.... But most of Syria's weakness, which has become ever more apparent since Bashar Assad assumed power in 2000, is political. It was forced to withdraw from Lebanon, following the assassination of Rafik Hariri in 2005. It has endured humiliating incursions into its territory, like September 2007's strike on a nuclear facility that North Korea was helping to equip.... Assad is directly culpable for these events.... For all these reasons, now is precisely not the time for Carter or anyone else to be kowtowing to Assad, whose position is as tenuous as ever. There may be little chance of peeling Syria away from its dangerous alliance with Iran. But we can still hope that a strong Western position vis-`-vis Syria, of the kind Carter has so far proven woefully incapable of taking, might one day encourage the kind of institution-building and civil society that would transform today's Ba'athist dictatorship into a regime capable of making peace with Israel.

12. Iran:

Summary:

Veteran journalist and anchor Yaron London wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QThe public is far from understanding that the threat of [sudden destruction] is the most important test of its leaders, and it is omitting this test from the considerations it is taking into account towards the election of the next Knesset.

Block Quotes:

QUnder the Shadow of the Doomsday Weapon

Veteran journalist and anchor Yaron London wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (12/15): QWe have to get used to living under the shadow of the threat of sudden destruction.... The public is far from understanding that this is the most important test of its leaders, and it is omitting this test from the considerations it is taking into account towards the election of the next Knesset. The horror is so great that most of us prefer to repress it. The political leadership does not share its thoughts with us because it does not want to alarm us, for fear that a public discussion will reveal our weaknesses and because the finest minds have not yet understood that we are in a state of emergency. Everyone settles for voicing the slogan Qwe will not accept nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran,Q knowing that at best, this can be slightly delayed.

13. Global War on Terror:

Summary:

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: Q[Palestinian] attacks strengthen Israel and the power of its claims, and put the Palestinians, Hamas, and Hezbollah into another context entirely -- not as a regional phenomenon, but as part of a global terror attack.

Block Quotes:

"Do Not Water the Blossom of Evil"

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist *Yediot Aharonot* (12/14): QThe more the media cover terror attacks, the more we encourage them.... The time has come to establish an international constitution for the media for exactly these cases, in order to reduce the achievements of Islamic terrorism, which has already given us a feeling of loss of control on a global scale. The media already understand that they are not a third party. They play a central role in the show. Freedom of speech is a sacred value until it encounters someone who uses it, cynically, for evil. Freedom of speech must now protect itself. The Americans realized that by themselves, and imposed strong censorship on the September 11 attacks. No corpse was shown on the screens, no names were released, the funerals were not seen. Why? Because that is a world power that takes both national morale and the rejoicing of the enemy into account. We, on the other hand, are sometimes experts in bringing ourselves to despair. The Islamic terror attacks have nothing to do with the QoccupationQ or our conflict. This is an attack on the values of the West, on freedom and on individualism. This is also an attack upon Jews only because they are Jews. And yet, there is some small comfort in shared trouble. Any shocking international attack such as this improves the world's understanding of Israel's situation, creates new solidarity, and deepens our position within the bosom of the West. Those attacks strengthen Israel and the power of its claims, and put the Palestinians, Hamas, and Hezbollah into another context entirely -- not as a regional phenomenon, but as part of a global terror attack.

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